

# CANADA'S NEW PARTY.



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## PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

At the Inaugural Meeting, March 21, 1888.

Allow me, in the first place, a word or two in regard to my presence here, and the somewhat active part I am taking in this movement. There is a prevailing opinion that ministers should have nothing to do with politics; and if by the word "politics" is meant only the questionable methods and bitter strifes that characterize party contests in this country, there is a good deal to be said in favor of the opinion. But the word has a far better and higher meaning. Rightly understood it comprehends the sacred trust of citizenship, as well as the grave duties and responsibilities of statesmanship. Understood in that sense there are few subjects which better deserve the attention of Christian men and Christian ministers. Moreover I reason in this way: If the political methods of the day are right, I am bound to do all I can to support them; if they are wrong, I am equally bound to do all I can to oppose or to reform them. When I became a minister I did not surrender the rights of citizenship, nor could I, if I would, evade its responsibilities. But if I am to exercise those rights with a clear conscience I must be free to protest against what I believe to be wrong, as well as to advocate what is right. Now I believe that the political methods of the day need to be radically reformed. Party has degenerated into faction: conscience is in bondage to party ends; principle is subordinated to expediency; and instead of appeals to a lofty patriotism, we have unblushing bribes offered to cupidity and ambition. I believe, further, that these evils can be remedied, but that this necessitates a breaking up of

old party lines, and a re-adjustment of political forces on the basis of a platform that makes for righteousness. It is for these reasons I am here to give what aid I can to a movement which aims to uplift our political life to a higher plane; to cultivate an unselfish patriotism; to base the country's suffrage on manhood and not on money; to admit woman to her rightful share in shaping the destinies of the nation; to protect our homes from the ravages of intemperance by striking at the very root of the evil; to defend our liberties from the tyranny of faction, and our country's resources from the greed of monopolies; to elevate our civil service above the level of mere party spoils, and to plant all our institutions upon the foundations of that righteousness that exalteth a nation. If there is one person here or elsewhere who can show cause why such results should not be aimed at, or why Christian ministers should not help to secure them, let him proclaim his reasons in the light of the sun.

Now in regard to the platform itself, it cannot be denied that the very first plank will be a stumbling-block to some. If the secret thought were honestly uttered some men would say, "What have righteousness and truth to do with politics?" But does not the question itself show the necessity of a radical reform in our political methods? If it be so that righteousness and truth have been divorced from political life, let us know why and wherefore. If their union is incompatible, let us know the reason. Righteousness and truth are moral qualities. They dwell not in things but in men. If they

find place in any human system, it is because men have put them there. If they are not found there, it is because men have ruled them out. If they have been ruled out of Canadian politics, it is the business of all good men to rule them in again if they can, and this can be done only by putting in the forefront of public life men to whom righteousness and truth are more than party shibboleths. To say that this cannot be done is to say that the country must be ruled by unscrupulous men, a conclusion I am by no means willing to admit. We must try to arouse the people from the tacit belief which, like a horrid nightmare, has paralyzed their energies, that politics are essentially evil, and that any effort to purify them is but wasted labor. We can have all the righteousness and truth in public affairs that we are willing to put into them; but if these are to be permanent factors, we must take good heed to the last clause in the plank—"no compromise with wrong." Neglect of this principle has caused all the mischief of the past, and reduced Canadian politics to the moral chaos in which we find them today. It has been by compromising with wrong, in order to win party victories, that good men have consented to exclude righteousness and truth from politics, and have reduced their own influence in public affairs to a feeble minimum.

I shall not detain you by a review of the various planks in this platform; there will be time enough for that hereafter; but I call your attention to the fact that the whole platform has its foundation in great moral and political principles, while specific questions have been restricted to those of greatest practical interest to the country at the present time. And therefore in asking you to come upon this platform you are asked to rally around principles, not around men—principles as immutable as truth itself, and good for all times and all circumstances. As other questions arise from time to time, we can deal with them; but we want, first of all, to settle those which touch most directly the welfare of the people. It is for this reason that prohibition is placed in the front, and there we intend to keep it. When that is settled other questions will have their turn.

But now comes the question, can we have three or more parties as permanent factors in Canadian politics? I answer, No! for the simple reason that while most questions have two sides, very few have three, and hence when issues are joined people naturally fall into position for or against, and the result is two parties, not three. But

in free commonwealths it sometimes happens that on great questions of reform both parties get on the wrong side, and this is notoriously the case in Canada at the present time. Such a state of affairs necessitates a re-adjustment which can be accomplished only by the creation of a new party with a definite policy. While the process of re-adjustment is going on there will be three parties for a time, but only for a time. As the new party grows it will draw to itself the best elements of the old parties, the men who believe in truth and righteousness, the men who believe that it is vastly more important that great reforms should be carried than that a particular party should hold the reins; while those who put party before country, who defend abuses, who burden the people with unnecessary or unjust taxation, who oppose urgently needed reforms for fear of losing votes, will naturally range themselves on the other side; and so it will become once more the old yet ever new conflict between truth and falsehood, between right and wrong, carried on with what seems at times a doubtful issue; but in the long run truth and right gain the day, and the cause of human progress gets nearer to high-water mark than ever before.

Such a period of re-adjustment is now upon us, and the need for it is great. The old parties have outlived their usefulness. Judged by what appears on the surface, they have neither principles nor policy, and their chief employment is to wrangle interminably over the most trifling questions, and swing their party shillelans in faction fights. The rallying cry is not—"Wherever you see a just principle, contend for it," but, "Wherever you see a head of the opposite party, hit it." So long as the present parties remain in undisturbed possession of the field, things will be no better. Remonstrances are useless. The only thing that will bring the party leaders to their senses is independent political action. In a struggle like this one independent ballot is worth a hundred arguments of any other kind.

There are many reasons which justify the formation of a new party. I will touch briefly upon two or three. The first is, that there is no hope of obtaining necessary reforms from either of the existing parties. The history of the last twenty years shows most conclusively that with them the great consideration has been "Party first; let the country take care of itself." Recalling that history, one is utterly astounded at the enormous waste of time and of public money, and at the very small amount of useful legis-

lation that has been put upon the statute book. There is only one thing which is more surprising, and that is, that the people, blinded by party prejudice and by the dust so plentifully thrown in their eyes, have submitted so long and so tamely to all this folly. During all this time, most important questions have been shelved. Reforms have been demanded in vain. To take one instance, for years and years the people have been saying to the existing parties, "Abolish the liquor traffic;" but the Conservatives say, "We won't," and the Liberals say, "We can't." There is but one remedy—let the people rise in their might and say to the leaders of both parties: "If you can't or won't, we both can and will, and if your old parties stand in the way, so much the worse for the parties." The issue is upon us, and we must meet it like men. We have spent far too much time in feeble remonstrances with the old parties, and a more vigorous policy is demanded.

"We've had enough of license laws,  
Enough of liquor's taxes;  
We've turned the grindstone long enough,  
'Tis time to swing our axes.  
This deadly upas-tree must fall,  
Let strokes be strong and steady;  
Pull up the stumps! Grub out the roots!  
O, brothers, are you ready?"

"No longer will we shield this foe  
To manhood, love and beauty;  
We've had enough of compromise,  
The right alone is duty;  
Enough of weak men and distrust,  
The burden grows by shifting;  
Let's put our shoulder to the wheel  
And do our share of lifting.

"We've had enough of forging chains  
This demon drink to fether;  
Good bullets from the ballot-box,  
Well sped, will fix him better.  
We've had enough of license laws,  
Enough of liquor's taxes;  
We've turned the grindstone long enough,  
'Tis time to swing our axes."

A second reason is, that it is useless to expect such a compromise between the present parties as will secure the legislation we seek. Both parties, as parties, have put themselves squarely against prohibition; and while there are members on both sides of the House who are decided temperance men and friends of prohibition, yet they are hampered by party considerations which

neutralize their influence. A striking illustration of this occurred at the present session of the Commons. On a motion to go into committee of supply, an amendment was sprung upon the House, touching the duty of the Government to make the Scott Act and its amendments a Government measure. At almost any other time, such a motion would have done good, and would have commanded support from both sides of the House, but as an amendment to a motion to go into Committee of Supply, it was regarded as tantamount to a vote of want of confidence. Instantly, every supporter of the Government took the alarm, and the amendment was voted down by what was virtually a straight party vote. All the circumstances made it plain that the amendment was not designed to help the temperance cause, but to embarrass the Government, and to make it appear as if all the friends of temperance were in the ranks of the Opposition. And this makes clear another point, viz., that neither party will hesitate, when occasion serves, to use the temperance question as a convenient cat paw to pull their party chestnuts out of the fire.

And as a compromise between parties in the House is impracticable, so it is impracticable in the Constituencies. This has been tried, and it has failed. In municipal matters good has been accomplished by the union of temperance men of both parties, but that is simply because, in many places, the party element does not enter into municipal contests. But in provincial or Dominion elections, party is the dominating factor, and turns the scale. At such times men say to us, and very justly, "You ask me to withdraw from my own party and turn my back upon life-long political friends, but only that I may vote with a party to which I have always been opposed, and whose record, as a party, on the temperance question, is no better than that of the party to which I now belong." The implied argument is hard to answer. It is unreasonable to ask a man to come out of the Eden of his own party to become a political "wanderer and vagabond" on the face of the earth. We must be prepared to show him that when he leaves his old party for conscience' sake, there is another and a better party into which he can enter; and this is what we hope to accomplish by organizing a party on the platform which is now before you.

A third reason, the last I shall touch, is that history furnishes some striking examples of great reforms accomplished by the readjustment of parties growing out of new

movements similar to our own. In 1800, both the Whigs and the Democrats in the United States supported slavery. For forty years many of the people preached and talked and prayed against slavery, but neutralized their prayers by voting for the parties who defended the evil. In 1840 they formed a new party, calling it the "Liberty Party," which in the next Presidential contest received only some 7,000 votes. Four years later the vote rose to 62,000. After that a wing of the Democrats espoused the principles of the Liberty party, and called themselves "Freesoilers." In 1848 these two parties polled a vote of 291,000. In 1852 there was an apparent loss, but in 1856 the Liberty party and Whigs united under the name of the Republican party, and polled a vote of 1,341,000. The rising tide reached high-water mark in 1860, when Abraham Lincoln was elected and the doom of slavery was sealed.

But the Republican party, which had delivered the nation from the curse of slavery, refused to deliver it from the curse of rum, and so in 1872 a Prohibition party was formed, and in four Presidential contests the vote was as follows: 5,608, 9,522, 10,305,

152,454! The last vote was for St. John, and is almost identical in numbers with the vote given for the Liberty candidate in 1852, eight years before Lincoln was elected. It is confidently expected that a Prohibition President will be elected in 1892.

And now, a word to prevent misapprehension. The formation of a new party does not mean a split in the temperance ranks: it only means that some of us, wearied with a policy of "masterly inactivity," propose to carry the war into Africa, and this unavoidably takes us in advance of those who still linger in the entrenchments of the old parties. But we are confident that when the roll of cannon and the rattle of small arms tells that the battle has fairly begun, our former comrades will not linger in the rear. Instead of asking us to bring back the flag they will bring up the men, and although they could not see their way to volunteer for the forlorn hope, we shall not grudge them their full meed of praise when the Malakoff of the rum power is taken. But before the hour of victory comes there is much work to be done, and it behooves every man who loves his country to do his share.

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W. MUNNS, *Secretary,*

PARKDALE, ONT.